



March 2010

ZOOM

IN ON THE USA

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St. Patrick Remembered on March 17

The patron Saint of Ireland was actually born in Britain about the year 389. Although his father was a Christian, Patrick was not very religious when he was a young boy. It was only when he was captured by pirates and sold as a slave in Ireland at the age of 16 that he found consolation in faith. He served as a shepherd for six years before he managed to escape and return to Britain.

His experiences in Ireland left a lasting mark on young Patrick. He decided to go back, but this time as a missionary to convert the Irish to Christianity. Preparing for this goal he traveled to France to study religion, first in a monastery of Lornis and then to Auxerre, where his teacher was

bishop Saint Germanus. When the first Irish missionary, Palladius, died in 431, Patrick was sent to follow in his footsteps.

His success as a missionary was tremendous. He is believed to have founded over 300 churches and baptized more than 120,000 people. His personal charisma as well as respect towards the inhabitants of his adopted land helped him achieve this spectacular success. Patrick remained in Ireland until the end of his life in 461, preaching and developing his churches. When he was proclaimed a saint, he was a natural choice to be the main patron saint of Ireland.

A lot is known about his life from his own writings, particularly Confession, which was an account of his spiritual progress. In addition, as is the case with other saints, numerous leg-

ends were born surrounding his person.



St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, Photo © Bozena Pilat

America in the Color of the Emerald Isle



All photos © AP Images



Photos (top left): Stacey Crawley sports shamrock sunglasses on St. Patrick's Day in Chicago; (middle left): Members of the Sheila Tully School of Irish Dance perform during the Annual Chicago St. Patrick's Day Parade; (bottom left): the Chicago River dyed green; (bottom right) Residents watch the water turn emerald green during the city's celebration of St. Patrick's Day in Fountain Park in Fountain Hills, Arizona; (above) Participants of St. Patrick's Day parades.

When it comes to celebrating St. Patrick's Day, it does not matter if you have Irish roots or not. However, *Zoom in on the USA* decided to ask about the Day an American whose family ties lead back to the "Emerald Isle" - Eileen Gallo, a New York teacher whose parents made America their second home.

Zoom: Eileen, when and how did your parents emigrate to America?



Eileen: My parents emigrated to the US separately. My father, Patrick, emigrated from County Derry to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1926 because he had some distant cousins and family friends there. My mother,

Molly, came from County Cavan to New York in 1939 to an aunt and two uncles here. After the Great Depression started in 1929, my father had to move to New York City in search of work because jobs were so scarce in Philadelphia. Many Irish immigrants in big cities were met with signs that said: "No Irish Need Apply" because jobs and housing were in short supply for native-born Americans, too. Part of the whole St. Patrick's Day celebration was to express their pride in being Irish, their culture, and their Catholic religion, all of which were often not appreciated or even belittled in the early years of settling in America. My parents met through my mother's brother who worked with my father driving buses in Manhattan.



Zoom: What are the differences between the way St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in Ireland and in the U.S.?

Eileen: In the United States, St. Patrick's Day was first celebrated as a holy day, as in Ireland, by the Irish immigrants who came to the big cities of the US to work primarily as laborers and domestic servants. Later it began to be a celebration of the Irish presence in and contributions to America. There are parades in New York, Boston, Chicago, Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, that I know of. There are smaller ones elsewhere. New York's is the largest parade down Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. The center line is painted green. In Chicago, the Chicago River running through the city is dyed green. Our daughter Laura has seen this when she studied medicine there.

Zoom: What traditional Irish food is eaten on St. Patrick's Day?

Eileen: Boiled corned beef, cabbage, and potatoes are the traditional foods served here. Corned beef is not as popular in Ireland. There ham, thick bacon, or lamb (or mutton) might be served. Beef stew, lamb stew, or shepherd's pie (ground beef, onion, seasonings, vegetables covered with mashed potatoes & baked) are also popular in the US and Ireland. Irish soda bread with butter is always served. There are many variations on this bread (with or without raisins, with or without caraway seeds, more bread-like or more cake-like.)

Zoom: St. Patrick's Day is also celebration of joy and spring finally coming after a long winter. How does that show in the activities of the Day?

Eileen: Irish music and Irish step-dancing are very popular. Some dances are called the Jig, Reel, Hornpipe, and Stack of Barley. Other more modern Irish dances have been added but I don't know their names. The dances I named are traditional dances, similar to folk dances. Irish music usually includes violins or fiddles, accordions, flutes, harps, and drums. There are marching tunes, dancing tunes, folk songs, ballads, and rebel or revolutionary songs recording Ireland's long history of fighting for independence from Britain.

Zoom: But there are plenty of melancholy ballads as well?

Eileen: Yes, the sad ballads tell of the leaving home or emigration of so many people (especially during and after the Great Potato Famine in the late 1840's), the rebels lost in the battles against Britain, and the early deaths of many due to sickness and poverty. At the same time, there also lively pub or drinking songs.

Zoom: Speaking of St. Patrick's Day, one should also mention drinks.

Eileen: Beer, stout, and Irish whiskey are celebratory beverages. Tea is typically drunk with all meals. Irish coffee is popular in the US. It is made with strong coffee, Irish whiskey, whipped cream, and a little sugar.

Zoom: On St. Patrick's Day the color in vogue is green, shamrock leaves are a common ornament; they are painted on glasses or trimmed on hats. Some people disguise as green fairies...

Eileen: Green is the big color for St. Patrick's Day. Many people, Irish or not, wear green that day. Green symbolizes Ireland, the "Emerald Isle," so named because of the predominance of fields of grass and shamrocks. Shamrocks are the three-leaved clovers that St. Patrick used to explain the Blessed Trinity to the Irish when he converted them from Druid paganism to Catholicism. Shamrocks, leprechauns (little Irish magical fairies who supposedly have pots of gold,) dancing figures, harps, and the Irish tricolor flag are popular decorations.

Zoom: And yet, March 17 is a normal working day in the U.S....

Eileen: St. Patrick's Day is not a public holiday with offices or businesses closed, but many Americans join those of Irish ancestry in celebrating Irish culture and contributions to America by eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and listening to Irish music.



Zoom: Thank you for the interview.

[Click to listen](#)

*The Jeanie Johnston, a replica of a 19th-century Irish emigrant barque.
Photo: © AP Images*

ACTIVITY PAGE

Win a Prize! March 2010 CONTEST

When is St. Patrick's Day celebrated in the United States?

Send the answer (with your home address) to:
madridIRC@state.gov

Win a Prize!

The answer in the February contest was:

America hosted 4 Winter Olympics

Thank you for participating

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Exercise 1 Nicknames

"The Emerald Isle" is the nickname of Ireland. In the United States, all states have nicknames. Match the states below with their nicknames. Then choose five other states and find out what their nicknames are.

States: Alaska, California, Delaware, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas.

Nicknames: The Beaver State, The Golden State, The Last Frontier State, The Empire State, The First State, The Pelican State, The Lone Star State, The Ocean State, The Sunflower State, The Magnolia State, The Sunshine State, The Bay State.

Exercise 2 Articles

Supply the articles (a, the), if necessary, in the text below:

St. Patrick's Day might be one of ... (1) world's most celebrated holidays, with ... (2) city-sponsored festivities held in Japan, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Great Britain and ... (3) United States as well as ... (4) saint's beloved Ireland. That ... (5) geography reflects ... (6) broad dispersion of ... (7) Irish, through choice or necessity, in ... (8) 300-year, globe-spanning migration. But perhaps in no other adopted nation is ... (9) Irish presence felt as keenly as in ... (10) United States, where ... (11) ethnic holiday has expanded to embrace all Americans.

In virtually every U.S. elementary school, public or private, classrooms are decorated with green; ... (12) failure to wear green to school on St. Patrick's Day might be punished with ... (13) playful pinch. Stationery stores sell ... (14) St. Patrick's Day greeting cards, bakeries offer ... (15) shamrock-shaped cookies sprinkled with green sugar, and local pubs serve ... (16) green beer.

Text from "America Goes Green for St. Patrick's Day" at America.gov

Exercise 3 Speaking

Work in a small group of three or four students.

- Imagine that you are going to take part in a parade held in your town on St. Patrick's Day. Tell them what you are going to wear.
- Are there parades where you live? If yes, on what occasions?
- Have you ever participated in a parade? What was it like?



Photo © AP Images

Answers to Exercise 1 and 2 can be found in the key webpage.